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Mrs. A. Frank

MEXICO:

ITS PRESENT GOVERNMENT,

AND

ITS POLITICAL PARTIES.

WASHINGTON:
PRINTED BY LEMUEL TOWERS.
1860.

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MEXICO:

ITS PRESENT GOVERNMENT,

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ITS POLITICAL PARTIES.

As there is a good deal of discussion about Mexican affairs, we consider the two articles which were published in June, 1858, with regard to this subject, and which throw a good deal of light upon it, will be interesting at the present time. They are therefore reprinted, as deserving the careful perusal of all persons desirous of getting information concerning a subject which is becoming prominent in our national politics.

A connected narrative and history of the events of the revolution now going on in Mexico, commencing with the coup d'état of December last.

PART I.

The inaccuracy of the various accounts published in the United States of the late events in Mexico, and especially of the *coup d'état* of the 17th of December last, impels us to publish the following brief but compendious narrative of the events which have quite recently occurred in that country. Our account of these events is derived from sources deserving full and implicit credit, and are based upon and borne out by all the official and public documents which have appeared at the time. Let us hope that this exact and faithful narration of the true state of things and of the course of events may

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tend to enlighten public opinion in the United States and to convey to the Government of that great Union the most correct views in reference to events which are, without exaggeration, of the greatest interest and importance.

There are two great antagonistic principles struggling fiercely against each other in Mexico at the present time. These two opposite and conflicting ideas are the foundation and basis on which the two great parties into which Mexico is divided are severally constituted—namely, the party of reäction, or, more properly speaking, of retrogression, and the party of progress—the former being the advocate of despotism and the latter of liberty. This struggle between the two great principles must necessarily be regarded with deep interest by the neighboring nations of America, inasmuch as whatever its termination may be, the result cannot but exercise great influence upon the political condition of all the various people of the continent of America. We propose, in a future separate article upon the principles and doctrines of the two great parties in Mexico, to show what would be the consequence of the success and triumph of either one of them. At present we shall confine ourselves to a narrative of facts, in order that the public may be furnished with fixed and certain data on which to form a judgment and obtain a correct idea of the true situation of things in Mexico.

OF THE COUP D'ETAT OF DECEMBER LAST.

As early as the month of September preceding, the necessity of a *coup d'état* was a common topic of free conversation in Mexico, the object in which *coup* was to be to declare the Federal Constitution of the 5th of February, 1857, as inadequate for the country, and to establish Don Ignacio Comonfort as President of the Republic, invested with dictatorial powers. Notwithstanding the state of anxiety and mistrust produced by these sort of rumors, the Constitutional Congress proceeded to its installation in the following month of October, and entered immediately upon the exercise of its legitimate functions. On the very first day of the meeting of Congress, the minister of the Executive Government presented to the House a suggestion, in which it was stated that the President of the Republic was of the opinion that the sphere of action marked

out for him by the Constitution was not sufficient to enable him to maintain public peace, and to carry out in an adequate manner the execution of the laws. In consequence thereof the President requested Congress, in accordance with the twenty-ninth article of the Constitution, to pass an act suspending for a time the action of several of the guarantees secured to the people in the same Constitution, and conferring upon him the power of resorting to extraordinary measures in the several branches of the finances and of the war department.

Congress hereupon, with the most unexampled generosity, not only granted to the Executive all the powers which he demanded, but when the committee of Congress brought in a bill granting all that was necessary and adequate for the crisis, it extended the powers granted in the bill, and went further in amplifying them than the committee had proposed.

There was every reason to hope and expect, after such a distinguished mark of confidence given by Congress to President Comonfort, that the employment of violent measures against the Congress would be abandoned. Such, in fact, was the prevailing opinion after this generous action of Congress, and consequently the rumors which had the month before been circulating very extensively with respect to an approaching *coup d'état* began wholly to disappear. In addition to all this, the appointment of Senor Juarez as Minister of the Government, was the cause of increasing the general confidence in Comonfort, and it was hoped that he would now proceed to initiate and forward those liberal measures which were looked upon as indispensible for the welfare of the country. This increased confidence in him sprung from the fact that the selection of Juarez was by many, if not by all persons, regarded as a pledge of a sincere alliance on the part of Comonfort with the liberal party.

With these hopes, the liberals in Congress were preparing to mature the measures which it was proposed to bring forward in the House, when suddenly it became known that General Huerta, commander of the brigade of Michoacan, had received a letter signed by General Zuloaga, who commanded the troops stationed at Tacubaya, and also signed by Payno, Minister of Finance, in which he was invited and called upon by these two persons to join them with the troops

under his command, in proclaiming the *coup d'état*. General Huerta, like a man of honor and integrity, as he is, on receiving this letter, laid it before the Governor of the State, who immediately transmitted it to the Legislature, in order that they might adopt, in relation to the transaction, such measures as they might think fit. The Legislature thereupon immediately appointed two of its members to proceed to the City of Mexico, who were charged with the business of bringing the matter to the knowledge of General Comonfort, the President hoping by this step to be able most effectually to break up the conspiracy and bring the guilty parties to punishment.

The manner in which President Comonfort received the communication, and the terms in which he spoke, not believing in the reality of the conspiracy, led the two gentlemen from the Legislature of Michoacan to suspect that President Comonfort himself approved of the plan and desired to be of the party of the conspirators. They therefore handed over the letter to one of the delegates to the Federal Congress from their State. That gentleman, at the next meeting of Congress, brought the matter forward and publicly charged the Minister of Finance, Senor Payno, with being guilty of the conspiracy, demanding, at the same time, that he should be brought to trial for the offence. The whole affair was in consequence referred to the action of a committee of investigation, which proceeded immediately into an investigation of the charge. The accused minister was sent for by the committee, in order to receive his statement. For two days Payno failed to make his appearance, giving various excuses for his not coming, and on the third day (which was the 16th of December) he sent a letter to the committee, in which he said that he had no other statement to make before them except to say at once and openly, that he was the writer of the letter in possession of Congress, and he alone was responsible for the conspiracy.

At sight of this audacity which the Minister Payno exhibited, it was no longer doubtful to any man but that the conspiracy would break out very shortly. There was, therefore, in consequence of this expectation, the utmost agitation and excitement in Congress. All, however, was speedily calmed, and confidence restored, in consequence of Juarez,

the Minister, appearing before Congress and protesting in the name of the President, that he (the President) was firmly resolved to sustain the constitution at all hazards and under all circumstances. The deputies accordingly were satisfied, owing to their confidence in Juarez, whose personal integrity and honor appeared to them a sort of pledge of the sincerity of this promise. They were soon, however, undeceived.

Early on the morning of the following day (Dec. 17) the city of Mexico was occupied by the troops of Zuloaga, who had made a *pronunciamiento* and commenced a revolution at Tacubaya, proclaiming the plan of government known by the name of the Plan of Tacubaya. By this plan, for which Zuloaga with his troops had pronounced, the constitution was denounced and set aside; Comonfort was recognized as President, to be invested with dictatorial and unlimited power; it was promised that an Extraordinary Congress should be assembled to make a new constitution, and in the meantime a Council of Government should be appointed.

This plan was adopted on the same day (December 17) by the brigade of Echeagaray, which was quartered in Cholula. On their pronouncing for the Plan of Tacubaya, (that is, on their revolutionary manifestations against the constitution) they took possession of the city of Puebla and expelled the Governor, Alatriste, from the place. Vera Cruz, under the lead of Zamora, Governor of the State, also declared for the plan; as did also the city of Tlascala, under the Governor, Vallé. General Moreno, with the garrison of Tampico, and General Morel, with the troops at San Luis Potosi, also declared their adhesion to the new plan. Toluca immediately followed these examples.

On the 19th Comonfort published a manifesto, in which he drew a deplorable picture of the state of the country, and asserted that all the evils which it labored under were the effect and consequence of the new constitution, which he said was odious to all the Mexican people; he furthermore said in his manifesto that the soldiers, in pronouncing against it, had done nothing more than to act as faithful echoes of the universal public opinion; and that he (Comonfort) acquiesced in assuming the dictatorship, with which he had been invested,

in order that he might save the Republic from the anarchy into which he beheld it ready to fall.

On the same day of this *coup d'état* —viz., the 17th of December—certain events transpired in Mexico which it was thought would produce a most decisive effect in causing the triumph of this new revolution. The first of these was the violent dissolution of the Federal Congress; the Speaker of the House and several members were arrested and sent to prison, thus making it impossible for the other members to assemble and to adopt any resolution or action. Notwithstanding this, however, a majority of the deputies held a meeting and drew up and adopted a solemn protest against all that had occurred. This protest, which was distinguished by strong reasoning and great energy and boldness of expression, was then published. The second event of this revolution was the conveying of the Minister, Juarez, to prison, the very same man who, the day before, had made his appearance before Congress, on the part of President Comonfort, to protest on behalf of the President, that he (the President) was determined to sustain the constitution at all hazards. Juarez had been appointed Chief Justice, or President of the Supreme Court of Justice, and in this character, as also in fulfillment of the seventy-ninth article of the constitution, it became his duty to enter upon the exercise of the functions of President of the Republic, on the supposition that Comonfort, by his accepting the Plan of Tacubaya, had thereby annulled his legal title to the Presidency, and had thereby descended from the post of Chief Magistrate of the Republic, to which the voice of the citizens had called him, into the ranks of a conspirator. It was, therefore, believed that by sending Juarez to prison the re-establishment of the federal government would be rendered impossible, and that the several States, for want of a centre of union, would be obliged to succumb, and that thus the triumph of the Plan of Tacubaya would be effectively secured.

But in spite of all these measures, and notwithstanding that it is usual in Mexico that every revolution effected by the chief power of the State always succeeds, at least for a short time, the authors of the Plan of Tacubaya beheld all their hopes blasted before them and their schemes defeated; the

several States of the Republic rejected with indignation the *coup d'état*, and prepared to support the constitution by force of arms. The revolutionists of the city of Mexico, instead of increasing the number of their partisans, beheld themselves and their cause deserted by all those who had been perfidiously led away and seduced by their false representations. They had falsely represented that the whole republic was agreed in the movement; and people had been made to believe that if this revolution was not adopted it would be impossible to prevent the return of Santa Anna to power. Governor Zamora and the State of Vera Cruz abandoned, therefore, their cause on the 30th of December, and returned to the support of the constitution and the defence of the constitutional order of things. General Moreno, also, in Tampico, published a protest in favor of liberal principles. The State of Tlascala, and Toluca, the capital of the State of Mexico, as also General Morel, with part of the garrison of San Luis Potosi, all came back again to support the constitutional order of things. Never before has public opinion been seen to make itself known and to utter its voice more unanimously or more energetically against the usurpations of an arrogant soldiery, than was done on this memorable occasion. It may also be said that never before has there been witnessed a greater error than that which Comonfort committed when he ventured to assert that the people of Mexico were those who rejected and spurned the constitution.

For want of a legal centre which the States might recognise—in consequence of the imprisonment of Juarez—the plan was adopted, as the best and most suitable means of opposing the revolutionists, of forming a coalition between the States of Queretaro, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Aguas Calientes, Michoacan, Jalisco and Colima. These States agreed to levy an army, in order to attack the revolutionists in Mexico on the western side.

The States of Puebla, Tlascala, Vera Cruz and Oajaca united together for the same purpose against the city of Mexico on the eastern side. Tamaulipas, New Leon and Coahuila also formed a similar coalition on the northern side, in defence of constitutional institutions, and at the same time the State of Guerrero formally protested against the new revolution.

In the more distant States of Durango, Chihuahua and Sonora, the *coup d'état* had been proclaimed by a few parties, but they were speedily reduced to order and to submission to the constitution. The same thing happened also in Chiapas.

Such, then, was the situation of the Republic of Mexico in the first days of January of the present year. Comonfort, having alienated from himself the sympathies of the liberal party, which had hitherto sustained him in power, now saw this self same party risen up *en masse* in order to oppose him, while the clergy and all the other members of the retrograde party, from whom alone he could now look for support, refused to lend him their aid, unless he would submit to grant them all they demanded. Thus it is, that the man who had imagined that it was in his power to establish his own personal authority, paramount to and without the assertion of certain fixed principles—who had imagined that he could make himself the regulator between the two antagonistic principles which were disputing for the empire over men, very speedily beheld himself reduced, by his double-dealing, to a condition of helpless impotence—to a most anomalous position. Henceforth he would be able to perceive that his double-minded policy, his conduct in seeking to find a middle path without attaching himself decidedly and uncompromisingly to either one of the antagonistic principles, instead of tending, as he vainly imagined it would do, to the pacification of the country, only resulted in opening a deep abyss at his feet, into which he was quickly to sink down, and there to be buried, leaving to his country, which he had brought into such peril, the legacy of a terrible and sanguinary struggle to go through—a struggle still carrying on, and which, it may be, will be protracted to a lengthened period of time.

THE REACTION BY AN ERRATIC SOLDIERY.

The clergy and the other members of the retrograde party being dissatisfied with the conduct which Comonfort had pursued, and being fully persuaded that he was not the man who would suit their views, determined at once to cast him down from the post to which he had been elevated, so as thereby to make themselves complete masters of the situation in the capital, when they would openly proclaim the reaction,

without any reservations, and without any half measures. Since now they had succeeded by the *coup d'état* in separating Comonfort from the liberal party, and in stripping him, by his own acts, of every legitimate title to power, it would be a very easy affair to get into their own power the instruments on whom Comonfort had relied when he launched forth out of the path of legality; for, inasmuch as those, his agents and instruments, were, for the most part, mercenary soldiers and hireling office-holders, the money of the clergy was a certain means of drawing such people over to their side.

This, therefore, they did, and acted accordingly. On the 11th day of January the troops of Zuloaga, who had been among the foremost to pronounce for the *coup d'état*, and for Comonfort as Dictator, now made a new *pronunciamiento* against Comonfort. They now went for a new revolution, and pronounced Comonfort to be unfit for rule and incapable of carrying out the purposes of the revolution. Zuloaga himself was appointed by them to repulse Comonfort and to take the chief command. The troops of Zuloaga, on this pronouncing being made, were immediately augmented by a number of the reactionists joining them, who had hitherto kept themselves in the background, concealed in the city or roaming about in the neighborhood, together with the adherents of Santa Anna and several Spaniards.

Then it was that Comonfort might have been able to comprehend what his real situation was; then he might have been able to understand what an immense blunder he had committed in breaking to pieces all his titles to legitimate authority, as Chief Magistrate of the nation, and in alienating from himself all the regard and sympathy of the liberal party. One recourse, at all events, was left him—a recourse which would enable him, if not to maintain himself in the possession of power, yet at least to put down the reaction, and to witness the chastisement of those who had so infamously betrayed him. This recourse was to set Juarez immediately and without delay at liberty, to deliver up the Presidency to him, and to proclaim the re-establishment of the constitution.

But whether it was from blindness, or whether it was from his still keeping up in his own mind the delusion that he could sustain himself as a solitary and separate unit, Comonfort lost

the most precious time in inaction. Of this time the clergy took advantage, and seduced from him by their money the troops, which up to this moment had remained faithful to him. Hence it was that when at last Comonfort decided upon setting Juarez at liberty, (which he did on the 16th of January,) and upon obtaining the assistance of the liberals, it was too late. There was not time enough for the liberal party to organize and lead on troops to the capital from the several States; nor, indeed, after all, could they trust any more a man who, if he was now fighting against the reaction, evidently was doing so more under the impulses of his own personal interest than as a decided and earnest defender of a great political principle.

Comonfort was finally overthrown in the capital. But this overthrow was owing more to the seduction produced by the gold of the clergy, and chiefly to the irresolution and want of frankness on the part of Comonford toward the liberal party, than to the force of arms. Comonfort erred also in this respect—namely, he mistook the character of the reactionists, and lost time in efforts to produce an amicable arrangement of matters—whereas they in the meantime, in violation of the armistice agreed upon, made themselves masters of the best military positions in the city, and at the same time, by the corrupting power of gold, spread dissatisfaction and dissension among the troops of Comonfort.

On the 21st day of January Comonfort found himself obliged to retreat, which he did, leaving the capital in the power of the retrogradists, who thereby became possessed of an immense quantity of munitions of war. On reaching the State of Vera Cruz he placed at the disposition of the Governor of the State the few forces which had accompanied him, and published a manifesto dated the 2d of February, in which he gave an account of the events which had happened in Mexico since the 11th instant, previous to the moment when he had made up his mind to leave the country. We shall here copy two paragraphs from this manifesto, because they are of great interest and help greatly to the formation of a correct judgment upon the things and event which had occurred.

He says, "a majority of the nation had given expression to

its will in favor of the constitutional order of things, and had rejected and disavowed the revolutionary plan of Tacubaya. Also, the States of Vera Cruz, Tlascala and of Mexico, who at first had favored the plan, being gifted with greater foresight than I myself had possessed, when they saw the turn that things were taking, retraced their steps and returned back to the support of the constitutional system."

Such is the narrative of these events. Since all the means which I had brought together for the purpose of combatting the reaction have proved a failure, and having recognized the President of the Supreme Court of Justice (Juarez) as the centre of union of all the States, I have now made up my mind to leave the country, considering such a step on my part as the best thing "I could do in the present circumstances."

Juarez, who, as we have before mentioned, had been set at liberty on the 16th of January, by Comonfort, immediately on recovering his liberty proceeded to Guanajuato, in which city he installed the Federal Government on the 19th of the same month. He of course considered the city of Mexico, in the state of warfare and confusion in which it was, as a very unfit place for the residence of the head of the government. He informed the several States of the Republic of the fact of the Government being installed in Guanajuato, by despatches sent by Ruez, the Secretary of the Interior, and he made it known to the Mexican people generally by a manifesto which he immediately published. On the 22d of the same month, Ocampo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, despatched an official note to the diplomatic corps in the city of Mexico, informing them of the installation of the Federal Government in Guanajuato.

Now, then, that this Government was in existence, which was both *de jure* and *de facto* the Government of the Republic, (since it was founded upon and recognized by the 79th article of the constitution,) the following States consequently recognized and gave in their allegiance to it: namely, the States of Aguas Calientes, of Colima, of Chiapas, of Chihuahua, of Durango, of Guanajuato, of Guerrero, of Jalisco, of Mexico, of Michoacan, of New Leon and Coahuila, of Oajaca, of Queretaro, of Sonora, of Tabasco, of Tamaulipas, of Tlascala, of Vera Cruz, of Zacatecas, the Territory of Lower California, and

the chief part of the States of Puebla and of San Luis Potosi.

The reaction party in the city of Mexico, immediately on the departure of Comonfort, set about establishing what it was pleased to call the government of the Republic. This (their government) can be considered as being nothing more than the mere government of the city, since its territory and power extended no further than the limits of the city; for, although General Echeagary who had possession of the city of Puebla, did not, it is true, recognize the Federal Government under Juarez, yet neither had he at this time any more recognized the government of Zuloaga. It was only some time after, viz: on the 24th of January, that he recognized Zuloaga's government. Also, Sanaloa, though it had indeed pronounced against the government, yet had done this, not for the government of Zuloaga, but for the revolution of the 17th of December. General Yanez also, commander of the forces of the State, had expressed his determination to remain neutral. The city of San Luis Potosi had also pronounced against the Federal Government, but it had done so in favor of a different revolution to that which placed Zuloaga in power. Lastly, the State of Yucatan, which at first had pronounced in favor of the *coup d'état*, so far from afterwards assenting to the revolution of the 11th of January, by which the retrograde party seized upon the chief power, proclaimed again the establishment of the constitutional system, while also at Tampico, General Moreno did the same thing.

Such, at this moment, was the situation in which the Republic of Mexico was placed, viz., on the 22d of January. On that day, Zuloaga, with no other title or authority than that of a leader of the rebels who had got possession of the capital, appointed twenty-eight persons, who, being made to represent the States and Territories of the Republic, (which States and Territories had neither appointed them nor recognized them,) were to proceed to the business of electing a Provisional President of the Republic. The election was made on the very same day by these persons; and, as is always the case in such transactions, the chieftain who had assembled them, Zuloaga, the captain of the rebel soldiers, was elected by them to the President of the Republic. On the 25th, Zuloaga, the newly elected President, appointed the members

of his cabinet, who consisted of Messrs. Cuevas, Elguero, Parra, Hierro, Maldonado, and Larrainzar.

The revolutionary government having in this manner been organized, the sphere of whose power extended no further than over the Federal District, and over the city of Puebla; it was immediately afterwards, viz., on the 27th inst., acknowledged by the diplomatic corps. This recognition of such a government by that body, created much and general surprise; for Zuloaga, under no consideration, could be considered as the head of the nation. His was not a government *de jure*, as was manifest, for it was present before the eyes of everybody how he had seized upon the government by the force of arms. Nor was his government *de facto*, because all the States of the confederation not only refused to acknowledge him, but were actually engaged in making preparations to resist and oppose him.

So precarious in fact was the situation of the so-called government of Mexico, that in the manifesto which was issued by the individuals who formed this government on the 28th instant, the very day after they had been re-organized by the Ambassadors of the friendly Powers, the following remarkable words occur:

"The constitutional party, which has been the incendiary cause of all our hostilities and enmities, which has also been in favor of a dictatorship without any limit to its powers, will, no doubt, ask the government by what right it has been set up, and what is its legal character. The government which only desires to present itself before the country under the simple form of disinterestedness and of truth, will instantly reply to this question by granting that its right is founded upon the right of self-preservation, and its legal character will be that which the Republic will bestow upon it, whose duty it is to save itself. It is possible that the government will be a national administration, or only the government of some of the departments of the Republic."

Can men whose own consciousness of their total want of any legal or even of material power drew from them a confession so conclusive as this—can such men ever be regarded as the government of the Republic? Yet they were thus regarded by the members of the diplomatic corps, while at the very same time, the nation at large was protesting against the re-action, and against this government which it had set up and recognized, and yielded obedience only to the lawful government now established in Guanajuato.

PART II.

The political parties now struggling against each other in Mexico may be distinguished by the names of the "party of progress" and the "party of retrogression." The first is the democratic party, which demands a government by the people for the benefit of the people, and the other is the party of the aristocracy, which demands that the people shall be governed exclusively by the privileged classes.

The one party proposes that society should be emancipated from the tutelage under which the colonial government held it subject; the other desires to keep it bound in the fetters of this guardianship, that it may remain forever in perpetual minority. The democratic party proclaims the sovereignty of the people and their right to govern themselves. The aristocratic party proclaims the government of right divine, and denies that the people have the right to govern themselves. Such are the respective doctrines of the parties which exist in Mexico.

The democratic party is, therefore, the representative of new ideas, of the principle of the liberty of man; it sustains the liberty of thought and of speech—that is, of political liberty—and it goes for civil, for religious, and for commercial liberty. It proclaims liberty to be a right belonging to man, essential to him, and imprescriptible; and it requires that there shall be no other restrictions put upon the exercise of this right, than such as are necessary to cause that no man within the sphere of his individual action shall injure or invade the rights of other men. Starting from these principles, it proclaims the principle of equality—not, however, of that absurd equality with which it is charged by its enemies with proclaiming, but the equality of rights in the presence of the law—that is to say, that equality which asserts and maintains that the law shall be the same for all men, and which altogether excludes the existence of a class of noblemen in society, as well as of hereditary titles and privileged classes.

The democratic party desires the greatest moral and material development for the people. It seeks to promote the former by extending public instruction, and the latter by encouraging labor and setting it free from all injurious and

vexatious trammels. And whereas, in order to attain both these desirable objects, the best means are the content of the people with the well conducted individuals and workmen of other nations, (who may be the means of communicating a practical education to Mexicans,) it labors incessantly to promote emigration on a large scale. Its object herein is that, by applying to Mexico all those agricultural and manufacturing improvements which have so much tended to advance the interests of other nations, all the immense elements of wealth and riches which Mexico contains so abundantly within her bosom may be gradually developed; that thus her deserts and wilderness plains may be populated with an industrious people; and that her territory, being delivered from the invasions of the savage Indians by a numerous and hardy population, peace, order, and liberty may be secured to the country; and, lastly, the existence of Mexico as an independent nation may be firmly secured and established.

As there still exists in the social organization of Mexico a portion of the principles established while she was yet a colony of Old Spain, it is the desire of the liberal party that these principles should be modified and altered, and made henceforth to be more in harmony with the new political institution. Inasmuch as the greater portion of the landed property of Mexico is in the hands of the clergy, they have not only by this circumstance exercised a most pernicious influence in the march of public affairs and business, but also by the immovability of property, as held by them, they have prevented the development of the national wealth, by circumscribing and limiting the range of the exchange of property to an immense amount, thereby impeding the movement and circulation of goods and property and preventing the increased production consequent thereon—all which contribute greatly to the welfare and prosperity of a people. On this account the democratic party has forwarded the measure of the sale of the real estate and landed property which the clergy held as administrators and trustees, with a view thereby to increase the number of property holders; causing the lands to pass into the possession of a greater number of persons, promoting thereby the subdivision of property, and giving an impulse to the circulation and distribution of wealth throughout the

country, thus leading to increased activity in agricultural and industrial production.

Ever since the time when the idea of independence began in Mexico, the clergy—who are, properly speaking, nothing more than simple administrators of the property in their hands (and not owners and lords thereof)—have never ceased employing that property in opposition to the liberty and independence of the country, in promoting and encouraging civil war, and in aiding in the subversion and demoralization of society. Such an abuse made by the clergy of property, which the piety of religious persons had confided to them for the purposes of beneficence and charity, is considered by the democratic party as the greatest hindrance to the peace, progress, and well being of the people of Mexico. For this reason it is the desire and great object of that party that the clergy should be deprived of the administration of property, which they have so much abused. They desire this not merely for the purpose of preventing the abuse itself, but also for the sake of converting the property to useful public objects, and to employ it profitably for the benefit and advantage of the people. These useful objects it is proposed to effect in various ways, namely, by giving regular salaries to the poor curates of the church, and thereby putting an end to the burthensome and impoverishing taxation which, under the name of parochial dues, &c., the poor are subjected to for the support of the clergy. It is also proposed to employ a part of the said property in effecting various public improvements which are imperatively called for by society, such as the erection of public schools, the formation of roads, &c., and also to employ another portion in the payment of the national debt, both domestic and foreign—a debt which weighs so heavily and oppressively upon the Mexican people.

Conformably with these views and principles, in the constitution of 1857, (that same constitution which, because it offended the clergy, has been, at their instigation, overthrown by Zuloaga and by the *coup d'état*,) the democratic party inserted and incorporated the principles of liberty of trade and commerce, liberty of industry, liberty of labor, and liberty of religion; declaring therein the abolition of all monopolies, of all exclusive privileges, of all prohibitory laws; abolishing

therein the system of passports and the law requiring foreigners to take out letters of security and permits of residence. By these measures it was proposed to promote the commercial relations with foreign countries, and to facilitate commercial exchanges both in the interior and with foreign nations—to encourage the settlement of foreigners of all nations in the country who might be willing to bring their capital and their industry among us, and, in a word, to communicate a great and general impulse to all the fountains and sources of Mexican national wealth.

The democratic party was determined to separate the Church from the State, because it was a union which has never been employed for any other purpose than for that of tyrannizing over men. In this view, the right to a civil action to enforce payment from the agriculturist and farmer of certain dues, or tithes, which were claimed by the clergy, has been taken away. Also, the power which the clergy possessed, of compelling persons who had entered into religious vows, to remain against their will, subject to monastic constraint in consequence of such vows, after they were no longer willing out of choice to submit to them, has been taken away. The democratic party does not desire that the civil law should be at the service of the clergy and made to interfere in that which solely pertains to matters of conscience. It is this view which has dictated the above measures; and in the same spirit the constitution of 1857 put an end to that religious intolerance which the clergy desires so earnestly to maintain; for the democratic party recognizes the right which every man has to worship God freely according to the dictates of his own conscience. It could not, therefore, lend itself to the tyranny of imposing by force of law a religion upon men, inasmuch as religion ought to be the spontaneous effect and result of inward feeling and faith, and not of coercion and force.

Such are the doctrines, the deeds, and the views of the Mexican democratic party in respect to the social, political and religious organization of the country. Its views with respect to foreign politics are plain and simple. It is firmly convinced that the interest of all the nations and people of America requires that they should maintain among themselves full, frank, and cordial relations of friendship and amity, and

that they should establish a continental—that is, an American policy—so as to bring about, by the friendly connection of all the republics of the American continent, that union and unity of action which is absolutely necessary for the successful maintenance of American republican doctrine. This would enable them to put an effectual barrier to European intrigues and European ambition, which are making constant efforts to establish their power upon the continent and over the nations of America. Such are the views and objects of the liberal party of Mexico.

The principles of the "retrograde party," or, as they call themselves, "the conservative party," are diametrically opposite to those of the Mexican democratic party. The views, purposes and expectations of the two parties are thus naturally and diametrically opposed to each other.

The retrograde or conservative party denies to the people the right of governing themselves, and wishes to set up a king or a supreme power, and an aristocracy, who may among themselves dispose of at their own will and pleasure the fate and fortune of the people and of the country. In order to obtain and secure the supremacy after which they aspire, they support what they call "vested rights," and all sorts of special privileges, and, in short, all and everything which may help to build up a class and make it superior to the great mass of the people.

Since it is one of the fundamental principles of the retrograde party that the people ought not to possess either moral or material well being, for fear that these things might lead them to a desire of emancipating themselves from thraldom; hence it is that they are in favor of putting restrictions upon the liberty of the press—of establishing individual monopolies—of separating and isolating the people from connection and contact with other nations—of establishing and keeping up intolerance in religion, and of uniting the Church with the State—that is to say, the material or physical power with the spiritual power. Thus they hope and desire that the people, being effectually subjected to the two-fold despotism both of the political power and the religious yoke—(the first being master over the bodies and the second lording it over the minds, the actions and the thoughts of men)—all and every-

thing may, thereby, be wholly, exclusively and unreservedly subjugated by, and obedient to the throne and the select privileged classes.

The retrograde party, firm in its determination to succeed, if possible, in establishing monarchy and priestcraft in Mexico, has ever attacked with determined opposition all the political institutions which have been established at various times ever since the nation obtained its independence, and to which it lent its aid in order to prevent the establishment in Mexico of that liberty which had been proclaimed in Spain in 1820. Thus it was that this party conspired against the constitution of 1824; then again against that of 1836, though it had contributed in a great measure to its formation. Then again it conspired to overthrow the constitution of 1843; and lastly, it has conspired, as we have described, against the liberal constitution of 1857, by bringing about the *coup d'état.* This party has conspired to overthrow all those constitutions, notwithstanding that all of them, except the last, guaranteed the military and ecclesiastical "vested rights," and proclaimed the continuance of the system of religious intolerance, securing the clergy in the continued enjoyment of all the immense property which they had got into their possession.

The views of the retrograde party, and the conduct they have hitherto uniformly pursued in order to carry their views into effect, clearly show what would be the nature of the policy they would pursue towards foreign nations if they should succeed in obtaining the government of the country. Should this party at any time succeed in making itself master of the situation in Mexico, and in procuring a complete triumph for its principles—inasmuch as, according to their views, there is no person in the whole country worthy of receiving the office and title of king; they would immediately set about offering the throne of Mexico to some prince of the European royal families. Such has always been their purpose and object, not merely because monarchy is a part of their principles, but also with a view of fortifying and supporting the monarch set up by them, by forming a close connection with some powerful European dynasty. Thus they would hope so to connect the new monarch with the old families of Europe, as to give to the throne a powerful support against the difficulties

and oppositions it would undoubtedly have to encounter with the great majority of the Mexican people, for their sentiments and opinions are strongly and decidedly in favor of republican institutions. Acting under the guidance of these ideas they have endeavored to keep up a constant and intimate communication with the Courts of Spain and of France, looking upon these two nations as those which were most disposed to favor and promote their objects, and to co-operate with them in bringing about their views. Should they then succeed in realizing their favorite idea, they would forthwith inaugurate a policy and course of action eminently hostile and dangerous to all the nations on the American continent living in the enjoyment of republican institutions.

What we here state to be the views and purposes of the retrograde party is fully proved to be the truth, by the facts which have occurred at various periods. On the proclamation of the independence of Mexico, under their direction, in 1821, they exhibited their views and succeeded in establishing them on the plan or platform of Iguala. But when, afterwards, their hopes were all dashed to the ground by the refusal given to their propositions by Ferdinand VII. of Spain, and when the Mexican people, in 1824, had made a constitution for themselves, and had established a government on republican principles, they then had recourse, again, to Spain, with their offers, and attempted a revolution against the established constitutional government, by setting up and proclaiming the plan of Montano. Afterwards, again, in 1829, they returned back upon the idea of bringing Mexico under the Spanish rule. This was the cause and origin of the invasion of Mexico by the Spaniards, under General Barradas, who landed with three thousand Spanish troops at Tampico. As they were, however, completely disappointed and discouraged by the unfortunate and disastrous termination of this attempt, they quietly reserved their projects, and kept them a secret, waiting for better times and a more favorable opportunity to bring them forward again. This was not presented to them till the year 1846, when they again obtained the assent of the Cabinet of Madrid to their views. Defeated again in this new project, they perseveringly returned to their purpose in 1853, putting

forward before the public the idea that Mexico ought to solicit Spain to assume the protectorship over the country.

If by means of the late reactionary movement which has taken place in the capital of the Republic, they (the party of the retrogradists) should succeed in establishing their power, we shall see them again soliciting, not merely the assistance and co-operaton of the Captain General of the island of Cuba, as Santa Anna, one of their chiefs, has already done, but we shall behold them calling for a more direct intervention on the part of Spain and France, and putting the country, if they can, under the protection of one or the other of those powers.

Having now endeavored with the greatest fidelity and truth to describe the doctrines and dogmas, the views, objects, and deeds of the two parties in Mexico, we will proceed, in conclusion of the rapid sketch which we have made, to present a few very brief reflections to the reader.

The views, tendencies and objects of the retrograde party of Mexico, absurd as they are, are impossible to be carried into execution from their very absurdity. Blinded by the one great passion which animates it, this party does not appreciate nor even understand the progress of the age, the wants of our time, and the great power of those irresistible operating causes now working in society, which it would be perfect madness to think of resisting. The laws which govern the world, in the moral as well as in the physical order, are infallible and irresistible. They must and will be obeyed. To attempt to arrest the progress of the people would be so absurd as to attempt to stop the law of gravitation and to prevent it from acting and producing its effects. This, however, is what the retrograde party is attempting to do; it thinks of checking the onward progress of the people.

It desires to establish a monarchy in Mexico, when all the elements which unite to constitute society are opposed to it. It desires to subject the country to a European intervention or protectorate, when both Europe and America are, in the natural order of political things, completely separate and isolated from each other, and each is the representative of a distinct and different mission, which it is their business to fulfill. Even if by a series of impossible events they should

succeed in beholding the realization of their great idea, yet would they not on this account find themselves much advanced in the completion of their projects. The social organization of those European monarchies from whom the conservative or retrograde party solicits support and assistance, is opposed to the very things which this party desires to establish. It desires to establish complete religious intolerance; whereas all civilized countries, even Rome herself, grant to other religions the liberty of being exercised in their midst. It desires to establish the military vested rights and privileges; whereas the French army is free from them, and is, notwithstanding, the first army in Europe. It desires to establish the ecclesiastic "vested rights," whereas the clergy of France, consisting of the most enlightened and famous ecclesiastics in the world, has, no such thing, and is, notwithstanding, a respectable body. It desires to put down the law, secularizing ecclesiastical property, whereas this law is founded upon a social and economical principle—a principle of political economy—the justice and necessity of which are admitted, and had been carried out, not only in France, but even in Spain itself. It desires to put down the law that the clergy should be salaried and paid by the State, whereas this is the principle which is established both in France and Spain.

So then, an absolute monarch, under the auspices of a European protectorate, religious intolerance, privileged rights, holding in mortmain the chief part of the land of the country, privileged monopolies—in a word, all and everything which constitute the aim and object of this retrograde party, are stamped with the seal of condemnation by the actually existing civilization of every civilized country. Therefore, to think of setting up these things as a regular system in America—in America, which is the nucleus of new ideas, and the hope of human progress for future ages—is simply absurd. But because it is absurd, it is also impossible.

The retrograde party of Mexico is doomed to be annihilated—to die—to perish by means of its own excesses and from its own absurdities, in the folly and madness of its views. Before, however, this event takes place, it has done and will do immense injury to the country. It may, in fact, be likened to a lunatic; but this lunatic, this raving maniac, is

armed with an incendiary torch, with which he is kindling a vast conflagration, but in the midst of which he himself will perish.

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